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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 0470
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY 0177
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY 0029
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 0013
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 0031
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TAGS: [PREF PHUM PREL BM IN](#)
SUBJECT: INDIA TIGHTENS SECURITY ON THE BURMA BORDER

REF: KOLKATA 0305

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On October 2, Assam Rifles soldiers detained three Burmese individuals at Khudengthabi security checkpoint in Manipur state in Northeast India, bordering Burma. India has not sealed its border with Burma. However, security at key crossing points has been increased. Peaceful demonstrations have been taking place throughout Northeast India in support of the pro-democracy protesters in Burma. Burmese living in Manipur are campaigning, along with noted Manipur human rights activist Iron Sharmila, against the Burmese Junta's crackdown. On October 6, in the nearby state of Meghalaya, the Second People's Parliament adopted a resolution in support of the Burmese democracy movement. In Assam, protests have also been organized against the Burmese Junta. In Mizoram, civil society groups made strong statements of support for the pro-democracy movement in Burma. Contacts in border areas say that so far there has been no significant movement of Burmese into India. The GOI should be strongly encouraged to clarify the status of the three detained Burmese and to grant United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representatives access to the detained individuals. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On October 2, Assam Rifles soldiers detained three Burmese nationals at Khudengthabi security check post in Manipur state in Northeast India. Manipur shares a 398 kilometer border with Burma that is manned by the paramilitary and state police. The Burmese were reportedly detained for illegally entering Indian territory without valid documents for which the state police registered a case under the Foreigners Act. On October 9, Manipur Director General of Police told PolOff that the borders with Burma have not been sealed, although he confirmed the arrest of three Burmese who crossed the border. Another contact observed that security along the Burma-Manipur border has been intensified in the Moreh sector and at other crossing points. A reporter from the "Imphal Free Press" conjectured that the arrests were probably political in nature and that the individuals likely were fleeing persecution in Burma, because Burmese frequently move across the porous borders and are seldom detained by officials.

13. (SBU) Burmese living in Manipur are campaigning peacefully along with noted Manipur human rights activist Iron Sharmila against the Junta's suppression of pro-democracy groups in Burma. On October 6, before an estimated 10,000-strong crowd at the Second People's Parliament in Shillong, Meghalaya, a resolution was adopted in support of the Burmese democracy movement and called for GOI intervention in the crackdown on protesters. PolOff, while at the event, noticed a small group of Burmese and a placard "Support Democracy in Burma" at the event. The meeting, organized by the Grassroots Democracy Advisory Council headed by Nationalist Congress Party MP Robert Kharshiing, was attended by six other Members of Parliament. On October 6, in Guwahati, Assam, academics and intellectuals lit candles to express solidarity with the people of Burma in their struggle for democracy. The event was organized by the North East People's Initiative for Peace, Justice and De-militarization (NEPI) as part of the "Global Day of Action for Free Burma," an effort by citizens to pressure the GOI to act against the repressive Burmese Junta.

14. (SBU) In the neighboring state of Mizoram, which shares a 250 miles border with Burma, the Chin community supported by Zoram Nationalist Party (ZNP) and Young Mizo Association (YMA) staged a peaceful pro-democratic rally in the capital city of Aizawl. The YMA, which in the past was hostile to migrants from Burma, has come out openly to support the peaceful protesters. YMA have requested that the Mizoram government ensure the safety and security of the Burmese who crossover the border for shelter. They have also requested the GOI to review its policy of "non-interference" towards Burma. A Chin contact in Mizoram informed Post that to finalize the strategy and to intensify a pro-democratic movement in Mizoram in support of the Burmese people, eight representatives from Chin areas in Burma will visit Mizoram. Post contacts in Mizoram from the state

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government, Chin community and non-governmental organization, have confirmed that so far no there has been no significant influx of Burmese into India.

15. (SBU) Comment: While the GOI remains noncommittal in condemning the Military Junta's violence against pro-democracy demonstrators in Burma, communities in the states bordering Burma have been far more vocal in their support for the Burmese protesters. In addition, rather than being receptive to possible political refugees, the GOI appears to be tightening its security on the borders with Burma and arresting a few Burmese that are coming into India. Without access to the three detained Burmese, it is not possible to assess whether they might be refugees fleeing the Junta's crackdown and persecution.

Local officials have only confirmed to Post that the Burmese were arrested for lacking proper documentation. The GOI has consistently denied the UNHCR officials access to the Northeast and as highlighted by this recent case, the absence of UNHCR makes the determination of political persecution difficult. The GOI should be strongly encouraged to allow UNHCR access to detained Burmese to determine if they are political refugees. As Burmese Junta continues its crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators, India may see a growing number of people fleeing Burma and simply arresting them all will not be a viable response, nor will it help with the perception that India is playing a far less helpful role on Burma than it could be.

16. (U) This message was coordinated with AmEmbassy New Delhi.
JARDINE